

GARY POST-TRIBUNE (IN)

26 June 1983

Former Marine plans lawsuit to gain information on Oswald

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MERRILLVILLE — A former U.S. Marine intelligence officer intends to file suit to gain access to government information he says may shed more light on whether Lee Oswald was a Soviet or Chinese spy.

Jack Swike of Merrillville said he is preparing a lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act.

He is seeking information about CIA operations at Atsugi, Japan, where Oswald was a Marine radar controller. Swike, who was an intelligence officer at the same base, said a possible connection between Oswald, the assassin of President John F. Kennedy, and the famous downing of the U-2 spy plane is only one topic he wants to explore.

Atsugi was the base from which the U-2s flew on spy missions that took the planes deep inside China.

Swike said he acted as liaison between intelligence officers of the U.S. Marines, Navy, Air Force and CIA, all of which had detachments at Atsugi.

Now executive director of the Lake County Medical Society, Swike has been doing research for four years in hopes of writing a book on Oswald's activities in the Far East.

He said the book probably won't draw any conclusions, but will present new evidence that Oswald was an informer who gave military secrets not only to the Soviet Union but also to China.

The Warren Commission, which investigated Kennedy's assassination, delved into the possible Oswald-Soviet KGB connection and found little evidence to link any such association to the assassination.

The commission also discounted any foreign involvement in the 1963 assassination.

"The full story hasn't been told," Swike counters. "The Warren Commission didn't investigate the Oswald Far East connection. There is more to all this than the public has been told."

The reason, says Swike, isn't any kind of conspiracy on the part of anyone in the government, although rivalry between the CIA and the FBI may have inadvertently contributed to a cover-up. Swike said the FBI was inept in not investigating Oswald's movements in the Far East and his access to information about several U.S. secrets at Atsugi.

"I have all the names of the 350 Marines were at Atsugi at the time and have spoken to many of them, including other air controllers who say that Oswald was in the radar room when they tracked the U-2s," Swike said.

"At first, they weren't exactly sure what they were watching but they knew it was something special because the blip just went right up off the screens in a flash. The radar covers altitude up to 50,000 feet. It was there and the next glance it was gone."

The takeoffs by the U-2s were like something out of science fiction and they attracted a lot of attention on the base, said Swike.

"The pilots walked out onto the apron wearing spacesuits, and there was a lot of rushing around to fire up the plane's engine," he recounted. "The U-2 would taxi a short way down the runway and all of a sudden it would go straight up."

The spy planes were capable of altitudes of 90,000 feet, and the pilots had to wear refrigerated spacesuits as protection against the heat at the high altitudes.

Swike has interviewed many of the Marines, including Oswald's acquaintances, military officers, and even relatives of Oswald's former buddies at Atsugi, in

compiling information for his book.

He said he has tried four years to get general information about the CIA operations at Atsugi, only to be told that the requests "are pending."

He said he is now about to go into U.S. District Court in Hammond to file suit to force the CIA to disclose contents of the documents.

The requests under the Freedom of Information Act are for information on the CIA Joint Technical Advisory Group at Atsugi, described by Swike as the largest CIA headquarters in the Far East at the time. The intelligence unit was there to assess information gathered from aerial spying in China and Korea, Swike says.

Oswald was stationed at Atsugi with the Marine Air Group and lived on the side of the base next to the technical advisory group.

In the center of the base was the Korean Village populated by Koreans, many of them communists, who were brought over as slave labor by the Japanese during the war, said Swike.

The Navy and Marines had air-control squadrons stationed at Atsugi for the defense of Japan.

As an air controller there in 1957, Oswald had direct access to CIA operatives flying the U-2s, watching the planes and even communicating with the pilots by radio, said Swike.

"Having access to that kind of military information made it seem natural for an avowed Marxist like Oswald to defect," said Swike.

"Oswald was not a dumb little boy like he's been made out to be. That kind of information he could provide was probably his ticket to Russia and any other Communist country where he wanted to travel."

Swike said the material he has gathered and wants to put into a book doesn't make any new charges but it does disclose some

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interesting new circumstantial evidence about Oswald's spy role.

Swike was a Marine first lieutenant involved in counterintelligence and security at Atsugi. He completed his tour of duty and left there in 1957, the same year Oswald arrived.

Oswald defected to Russia in 1959. The Russians shot down and captured CIA pilot Gary Powers while Powers was flying a U-2 over the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960. The plane had taken off from Turkey. Swike said he has received information in interviews that Powers also flew out of Atsugi and had spoken to Oswald there. He said CIA files could substantiate that if he can get access to them.

It has been theorized before, mainly in a 1981 Readers Digest book, that Oswald gave the Soviets information about the U-2 that enabled them to redesign their rocket guidance systems to knock down the spy plane.

Swike points out that Oswald could have learned a lot through visual, radar and radio observation about the U-2 to penetrate its defenses.

Through correspondence with Oswald's former acquaintances, Swike said he has gathered further information on Oswald's contacts with people within the communist circle in Tokyo, and that he lived with a Russian woman while he was stationed temporarily at an air base in South Japan at Iwakuni.

"There are no records of this, although I have spoken to two former Marines who saw him there," said Swike.

He said Oswald frequented expensive nightclubs, which he couldn't afford on his Marine's pay, and one nightclub was frequented by intelligence agents of various nations.

Oswald was repatriated about 2½ years after he defected to Russia. With his Russian-born wife, Marina, he eventually settled in Dallas, where he was involved in pro-Cuba activities and made trips to South America.

He eventually got a job at the Texas Book Depository building, from which a sniper shot and killed President Kennedy as he rode by in a motorcade in 1963.